

The questions “Where did ‘I’ come from?  
Where will ‘I’ go?” have concerned human beings for countless lifetimes.  
This “I” is a conventional truth,  
an accepted way of speaking,  
cherished by almost everyone.

The Buddha solved this question with the exposition of  
the doctrine of Dependent Origination he rediscovered.



**Dependent Origination is the doctrine of conditionality—  
to show how the conventional “individual” revolves in the wheel of existence,  
undergoing the cycle of birth and death, and  
how suffering ceases by the cessation of the causes and conditions that perpetuate the cycle.**

## THE DEPENDENT ORIGINATION FORMULA

Dependent Origination consists of interrelated factors:

Dependent on **ignorance** arise karmic formations;

Dependent on **karmic formations** arises consciousness;

Dependent on **consciousness** arise mind and matter;

Dependent on **mind and matter** arise the six sense-bases;

Dependent on **the six sense-bases** arises contact;

Dependent on **contact** arises feeling;

Dependent on **feeling** arises craving;

Dependent on **craving** arises clinging;

Dependent on **clinging** arises becoming;

Dependent on **becoming** arises birth;

Dependent on **birth** arise **aging, death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair.**

Thus arises this entire mass of suffering (dukkha).

**The factors are mere mind and matter, not an abiding self.**

*Ignorance is not knowing the FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS:*

*the Noble Truth of Suffering,*

*the Noble Truth of the Origin of Suffering,*

*the Noble Truth of the Cessation of Suffering,*

*the Noble Truth of the Path Leading to the Cessation of Suffering.*

Because of ignorance of the Four Noble Truths, we perform *physical, verbal and mental* formations that pave the way to rebirth consciousness.

When birth takes place, mind and matter arise.

Dependent on mind and matter arise the six sense-bases of eye-, ear-, nose-, tongue-, body- and mind.

When there are six sense-bases, six contacts of eye-, ear-, nose-, tongue-, body- and mind occur.

Dependent on each contact arises three types of feeling—pleasant, unpleasant and neutral.

Feeling stimulates and initiates craving.

**There are three types of cravings:**

- ❖ **Craving for sensual pleasure**—is longing for sense objects that are agreeable, beautiful, and pleasurable.
- ❖ **Craving for continued existence**—is associated with the wrong view of eternalism.
- ❖ **Craving for non-existence after death**—is associated with the wrong view of annihilationism (believing that beings are annihilated at death with no rebirth and no further results of karma).

**Craving is the origin of suffering.** Its near cause is feeling. Pay attention to feelings as impermanent, as incessantly arising and passing, as suffering, as a boil, a dart, as insecure, and as devoid of self. This way of perceiving and conceiving of feelings effectively blocks craving from arising. Just accept whatever feeling there is, as it is, with a detached and dispassionate attitude.

*Buddha said: “Recluses, whatever ascetics and brahmins in the past, present, or future regard what is in the world with a pleasant and agreeable nature as permanent, as happiness, as self, as healthy, as secure—they nurture craving.*

*In nurturing craving they nurture suffering;  
they are not freed from suffering, I say.” (SN 12.66)*

**Dependent on craving arises clinging**—those who crave sensual pleasures gradually see their craving develop into strong sensual clinging that they are unable to let go.

**Dependent on clinging arises becoming**—this refers to the karmic activities, both wholesome and unwholesome, that constitute karma that generates rebirth.

**Dependent on becoming arises birth**

When becoming matures at the time of death, it produces future birth.

“Birth” means the first manifestation of aggregates of a living being when rebirth takes place in any existence. Correctly speaking, it is neither “the same self” nor another person that is reborn.

Such terms as “person,” “personality,” “self,” “woman,” “man,” “individual,” “I,” or “you” are merely conventional expressions used for the sake of clarity and convenience.

What comes to birth is merely mind and matter. Their nature is to quickly arise and pass away.

To identify with mind and body as “I,” “me,” or “mine” is to say that we are dying and being reborn at every single moment.

**Dependent on birth arise aging, death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair.**


Thus arises this entire mass of suffering (dukkha). Suffering is like a wheel. As long as the root causes of ignorance and craving remain intact, mind and matter will repeatedly spring to life.

Ignorance is placed first in the chain of Dependent Origination because it rules as the basis of all the other factors, like an influential king. Craving is like the chief minister who does the king's bidding.

*Dependent Origination in an ultimate sense is the endless process of cyclical arising, passing, re-arising, and re-passing undergone by mind and matter.*

*Dependent on impersonal conditions with no indication of any persisting entity that can be taken as "I" or "self, the ongoing process of arising and passing away is nothing but repeated suffering. Paradoxically, because no one undergoes this suffering, it is said: "Suffering exists, but no sufferer is found." No doer of deeds is found, No one who ever reaps their fruits, Empty phenomena roll on.*

*This alone is the correct view.*



**Buddha: "Ananda, it is through not understanding, not penetrating the doctrine of Dependent Origination that the world has become a tangled ball of thread, a bird's nest, a thicket of reeds, and does not escape from woeful states of existence, from the unfortunate course, from perdition, from suffering in the round of rebirths." (DN 15)**